On *The Sea, The Sea* by Iris Murdoch

≪ Prospero abjured magic but never drowned his book≫

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It has been of great importance for Murdoch to join her moral concept and her aesthetic imagination into a unified work. She maintains that we are usually imprisoned in self-love and fantasy. In order to free ourselves from this prison, we must watch the ordinary people and the everyday happenings around us with attention; we must respect what we see as it is, even if it seems far from the solid causality. She calls it the contingency, the accidental whose existence we hardly suspected before. To gain such a new perspective of this world and to get out of egoism are the difficult tasks for us to undertake. And this is the only starting point towards our moral destination of learning to be good and reaching a transcendental reality. Her moral concept, as you may easily see, is analogous with Plato's "The Simile of the Cave" in *The Republic.*[1] Plato tells his desciple, "... the truth of the matter is, after all, known only to God.... the final thing to be perceived in the intelligible region, and perceived only with difficulty, is the form of the good." Murdoch is a follower of Platonic mysticism and a fellow-traveller of such Christian existentialists as Simone Weil and Gabriel Marcel.[2] In "The Sublime and the Good" Murdoch writes, "Art and morals are, with certain provisos, one. Their essence is the same. The essence of them both is love. Love is perception of individuals. Love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real."[3] In a word her primary moral aim is to attain such selfless love for others in our daily life.

Some critics complain that Murdoch's novels are so full of eerie events, symmetrical relationships and grotesque characters that they feel the author's manipulating hand everywhere. That is because, they say, "her elaboration of moral precepts has overridden attention to her art."[4] But this critical comment does not seem applicable to her every work. Her five works, *Under the Net* (1954), *A Severed Head* (1961), *The Black Prince* (1973), *A Word Child* (1975) and *The Sea, The Sea* (1978) are more or less free from her philosopher-ghost. It may be more correct to say that in these novels her art perfectly contains her moral precepts through some technical devices. One of the devices is the first-person narration in which all of them are written; this adds a deep introspective hue to her neat exciting plots and poetic descriptions. In other words, the author's philosophical inclination is fully but unobtrusively reflected in the characterization of the male narrators, though I cannot see why this device should involve only *men*! The first-person narrative method is also a convenient way to present the narrators' process of awakening into reality by sheer experiences: we do not feel the author intruding into the fictional world. At the beginning of the novels, most of the narrators, though being full of good intentions, are more or less in the situation of seeing all but understanding little. They have to grow in order to understand more of the truth of life and death. To tell a story by following the stream of consciousness of one character is a good way to give us an ironical pleasure and the feeling of suspense as if we were enjoying a well-made drama which is more real than the real life itself.

Among these five afore-mentioned works, *The Black Prince* and *The Sea, The Sea* seem like twin brothers in their dramatic and technical excellence rather than in their philosophical discussions. Both middle-aged narrator-heroes are artists who go through the meddlesome afflictions of love for their obscure ladies; this pseudocourtly love is one of the author's favorite themes. Additionally both artists write about their experiences in the form of memoirs. They present and narrate their stories artistically, which shows the author's growing concern with the technique of story-telling. Furthermore, as A. S. Byatt indicates, Murdoch has increasingly made use of Shakespearean

plots and references to Shakespeare.[5] In *The Black Prince*, Bradley, an unsuccessful novelist, continues to ponder over verbal creative activity and, like Hamlet, murmurs "Words, words, words."[6] His attachment to adolescent, androgynous Julian can be likened to that to black attired Hamlet. On various levels *The Black Prince* can be said a novel based on *Hamlet*, which is a "high example of the 'realism', moral and aesthetic, that she (Murdoch) wishes to understand and achieve."[7] More significant references to Shakespeare can be seen in her latest work, *The Sea, The Sea*; which consistently alludes to Shakespeare's last play, *The Tempest*. How and why does Murdoch repeatedly go to this particular drama for a source of imagination? Does the novel succeed in fusing the fantastic play which is far from "realism" with the narrative form of the novel? These will be the main points of my arguments.

The first noticeable point lies in the construction; the play and the novel share a fundamental dramatic procedure. The novel is separated into three parts, a serene and introductory "prehistory", a confused and eventful "history" and a tranquil "posthistory" with the air of an open-ending. The storm scene of *The Tempest* is a prelude to a terribly confused reunion-scene under the supervision of Prospero's magical power. After reconciling with his enemies, the magician gets back his usurped throne among his fellow beings, though we cannot know what his life is like as an ordinary man in his native locale, Milan.

Secondly, the location of the drama is set on a magical island surrounded by the sea, while the main setting of the novel is an exposed and isolated sea-side house called "Shruff End"; it is said "Shruff" means "black", something dark and ominous.

Thirdly how are the characters of these two works related? On the island, a poor exile Prospero learned magic in order to control others. Whereas Charles Arrowby, a retired actor, playwright and director over sixty comes to this sea-side paradise leaving his magical delusions in the theatre behind him, saying "Now I shall abjure magic and become a hermit."(2)[8] He repents of his egoism and longs to be good. But we need not be disappointed at the seeming difference between the situation of Prospero and that of Charles. In spite of bitterly regretting his former life, Charles still retains Prospero's personality; he is a self-centred tyrant, a director of others. Knowing that his former love, Lizzie Scherer has settled happily with homosexual Gilbert Opian, Charles, mostly out of jealousy, attempts to lure her into a submissive love affair with himself. He regards his cousin James as a mortal enemy to defeat, because James had a more fortunate childhood and was superior in everything. His memoir shows that his insipid and puritanical home is sharply contrasted with that of James, which was colorful and joyous. His envious longing for his cousin's happiness may have prompted him to enter the theatrical profession and resulted in a degenerate and lascivious life. Charles's anger at injustice and that of Prospero are entirely different in quality. Now his worldly success in the theatre is his only source of self-satisfaction, on the other hand his cousin has been an obscure military officer. This one-sided rivalry is described as *cousinage, dangereux voisinage* by Charles who, strangely enough, cannot stay remote from his dangerous relative. His possessive love for Lizzie and his jealous hate for James demonstrate how much he loves himself and how aggressive and willful he is. Prospero is likewise the stern master of obedient Ariel and other fairies; he is especially merciless to the evil ugly monster Caliban. Once Charles loved his friend's wife, Rosina and after their divorce he deserted her with practically no guilt feelings towards either party; "guilt feelings so often arise from accusations rather than crimes."(74) Through a sort of magic mirror, i.e. fantasy, Charles deforms everything real in order to justify and deceive himself. Just as Prospero is a magician with so portentous art, so Charles is an artist who, by a touch of his verbal wand, can transform people he chooses into smaller creatures so that he may be the master of them all. His memoir is destined, he writes, "for permanence, something which cannot help hoping to endure."(2) This type of artist tends to be a self-deluded magician. And through the casual first-person narration we notice his complacent half-blindness, his situation of seeing all but understanding little. This tyrannical and wayward Prospero has one fatal flaw, which is the lack of clairvoyance.

Charles, born in central England near Stratford-upon-Avon, was charmed by Shakespeare as a schoolboy, went on the stage and produced Shakespeare's plays till his retirement. As an actor Prospero was his best part, when the role of Ariel was performed by Lizzie, who always gave her selfless devotion to her Prospero. He loves her as if she were his son and what he expects from her is only obedience and filial obligation. Ariel in *The Tempest* begs Prospero to give his liberty and Lizzie asks the same of Charles. She answers his tempting letter by saying, "The habit of obeying you is strong in both of us (Lizzie and Gilbert). Don't use your power to hurt us. You could put the most terrible pressure on us, only don't do it!"(46) It is not an exaggeration to say that Charles has been and is living the life of Prospero, casting those unwilling actors in the parts of enemies and friends. "Have I abjured that magic, drowned my book? Forgiven my enemies? The surrender of power, the final change of magic into spirit?"(39)[9] The answer will be negative, as long as his magic keeps power to subdue himself and others.

The part called "prehistory", on the whole, has a rather quiet nonchalant air compared with the succeeding part, since the narrator has made up his mind to have no special relations except with the sea and his surroundings. He enjoys swimming, jotting down his daily notes, cooking simple meals and reminiscing things in his own past. He prevents anything contemporary from intruding into this peaceful seclusion. But it rather resembles more the dead calm before a storm than pure serenity. By and by he or the house reveals itself to be haunted by something; faint noises are heard, a human face looks into the house through a window pane, the mysterious mirror in the hall is found broken to pieces and strangely enough he sees a huge black sea serpent coiling up with a red mouth open on the surface of the sea. He tries to persuade himself that they are only natural phenomena, his own hallucinations, and nothing to be so terrified about. Perhaps he may be right. But it is surprising that we do not feel that such unreasonable queer happenings are irrelevant in this context; this is because we have been prepared to identify Shruff End with Prospero's island by reading many direct and indirect allusions to *The Tempest.* In her other novels Murdoch often describes such weird episodes but their sudden intrusions into the realistic world make them appear as mere conceits or easy symbolism. Of course these apparitions will be logically explained away but it may also be possible that a self-deluded solitary man in that particular atmosphere can produce those ghosts and monsters out of his mind. We should note the fact that Charles is obsessed with those objects with transparent surfaces which is, without doubt, one of the attributes of water. After the fearful experience of seeing the monster, he recalls the unutterable shock he felt as he had taken LSD years before.

> It was something morally, spiritually horrible, as if one's stinking inside has emerged and become the universe: a surging emanation of dark half-formed spiritual evil, something never even be escaped from. "Undetachable", I remember, was a word which somehow "came along" with the impression of it ... It is true that the rising coiling monster did not really resemble what I saw on the first occasion .... But the feeling of horror was similar in quality, or at any rate began to seem so very soon after the experience itself. (21)

Here we should remember that he recognized the undeniable existence of "dark spiritual evil" in the universe and in himself.

And at the end of "prehistory" he leads us into the depth of his heart. We know he has been keeping a sacred glorious image of his first love in his memory. How emotional and imaginative he becomes when he tells about his youth, inseparably connected with the memory of pure and good Hartley! His noteboook suddenly glows with such words and phrases as divine blessing, paradise, the Garden of Eden, innocence, angels and he repeats that his goodness surely resided in his other half, Hartley. He was like the poet who feared the angels' envy at their blissful love but declared even death could not separate them. But remember while he was in London giving his devotion to Shakespeare, his Annabel Lee fled from him to marry another man, and she left "the demon of jealousy" in his mind. Because of jealousy and exasperation, he says, he has lost his innocence and goodness, though Hartley's image remains vivid and

precious all the time. Before he starts telling about Hartley, he recalls an illumination having come to him.

> Since I started writing this 'book' or whatever it is I have felt as if I were walking in a dark cavern where there are various 'lights', made perhaps by shafts or apertures which reach the outside world. ...There is among those lights one great light towards which I have been half consciously wending my way. It may be a great 'mouth' opening to the daylight, or it may be a hole through which fires emerge from the centre of the earth. And am I still unsure which it is, and must I now approach in order to find out?(77)

This apparently relates to the Platonic vision of the cave and shows that Charles will have to make clear to himself what that "one great light" is. By exploring the dark region of his mind, i.e. writing the memoir of his past, he will come to know his real self. Here, too, is a Dantesque image; the great mouth may lead him to his heavenly first love but from the hole of his purgatorial mind will burst the fires of jealousy. Besides, the hole unmistakably refers to the sea serpent's red mouth, at which sight he remembered the feeling of fear of undetachable spiritual evil. And it is needless to say that the serpent in Paradise was envious and jealous of Adam and Eve. Now we can see that the black monster symbolizes his jealousy, a reverted form of self-love which should be overcome if he longs to be good, to know reality. By subtly connecting the visions of the monster and the cave, Murdoch gives a much deeper meaning to each of them. Thus with this elaborate device the author foretells the narrator's coming crises, which are due to his latent evil.

At the end of "prehistory" his Beatrice appears out of the blue after forty years. She lives with her husband, Benjamin Fitch near Shruff End. This encounter itself seems too timely to be real, but the locale is Prospero's island where anything improbable can happen. As if he were Orpheus or Perseus, he starts to make plans for Hartley's rescue from her miserable marriage and her insignificant but tyrannical husband.[10] After all he is a director planning and wielding his power over the actors. Before his discovery of Hartley, he had made up a fictitious, unhappy and remorseful Hartley and had charmed himself into believing it. So he has "power to transform, to raise up, to heal, to bring undreamt-of happiness and joy (113)" to the beggar maid over sixty. In Charles's fantasy, Hartley is a young, chaste virgin Milanda finally wedded to Prince Ferdinand. After innumerable ordeals Charles and Hartley would be united to live as happily ever after as the pretty couple in *The Tempest*. Satisfied with his own faithfulness to Hartley and his growing contempt for Ben, he goes to London to pay a temporary visit. Then in an art gallery he meets his jealous serpent again.

> I was gazing in a dazed way at Titian's picture of Perseus and Andromeda, and I had been admiring the graceful naked figure of the girl....the terrible fanged open mouth of the sea dragon, upon which Perseus was flying down head first. The sea dragon did not quite resemble my sea monster, but the mouth was very like, and the memory of that hallucination, or whatever it was, was suddenly more disquieting than it had ever been since the first shock of its appearance....Rembrandt's picture of Titus. So Titus was here too. Titus and the sea monster and the stars and holding Hartley's hand in the cinema over forty years ago.(171)

According to his allegorical explanation, Andromeda-Hartley will be saved from the sea dragon-Ben by Perseus-Charles. What a desirable image Titian's[11] picture gives! But why is the open mouth of the dragon so disquieting? Because he instinctively knows it is neither the mythical revengeful monster's mouth nor Ben's brutality but the inferno of his own mind. Afterwards at Shruff End he sometimes watches the sea to call out the serpent when he needs his raging jealousy to promote a decisive action.

The Fitches' adopted son is named Titus, and he wanders about seeking his true father. Rembrandt's[12] painting implies that Titus would be indispensable to the newly-founded family group. Whichever family, the old one or the new one, he may belong to, his part of an adopted son literally and figuratively will be the same. After hearing the news from Hartley that Ben

suspects Titus to be Charles's son, which is the chief cause of their quarrel, Charles readily casts Titus in the part of a person essential to his life with Hartley and an obliged son to his generous step-father. Significantly enough in the New Testament another Titus was called "my son" by Paul, an apostle.[13] It is said that Saul, a soldier was one day struck the eyes by a beam of light from Heaven. His agony of blindness changed his identity into Paul, when his eyes were open again. Perhaps Titus will always be a son-figure for Charles, and Charles should follow this awakening drama of Saul. When Titus comes to him, Charles "is already feeling rather possessive about Titus (252)" and says, "I am cast in the role of your father."(261) Then with some plottings and deceptions, the farcical rescue drama begins. He succeeds in getting his bride and son by his side but he has to lock up Hartley to prevent her escape or her suicide from terror, as Sycorax with black magic put Ariel in a tree trunk. We see his role as beneficient Prospero has changed into that of an evil sorcerer.

Then the main drama of this part is performed. Those who are involved with Charles are summoned up at Shruff End; Gilbert has come earlier, then James, Rosina's former husband Peregrine, Lizzie and even devil-like Rosina may be hovering around. This is apparently a parody of *The Tempest* in which all enemies and friends are assembled on the island by Prospero's art. Here, too, we might feel that this reunion-scene is too easily contrived, whatever excuses each visitor may have. In fact James and Peregrine say the same thing in the same way; they have come for a holiday to answer the master's invitation, though Charles has never asked them to come. Anyway all enemies and friends stay at Shruff End waiting for the destined climax.

Whatever sensible advice the guests may give, he becomes more and more desperately obstinate and crazy. But James finally makes his cousin release the prisoner. In Charles's mind no one has been a more portentous figure than James except Hartley. A devotee to Eastern mysticism, James seems to know everything about Charles, even from afar. A real seer, James frankly criticizes Charles for having been misguided and obsessed by his own dreams of the first love and changing everything past into a ghost or a demon. He is too blind to know reality but he should be awakened and humble enough to do what his daily moral senses tell him to. No one can be a director of others' lives. It perfectly corresponds with Murdoch's philosophy of fantasy, and James seems one of her rare living mystical characters. But it is needless to spend time on James's philosophical argument; enough to say, he proves to be Charles's friend, amiable aunt Estelle's son, his shadow and twin brother. Both of the cousins care about each other out of not only abstract enigmatic inspiration but out of the consciousness of their blood relationship. At least they share childhood memories and we know that Charles's real first love was not Hartley but James's mother Estelle.

For Charles's complete awakening, however, more ordeals will be inflicted on him, for he still clings to the fantasy of Hartley's final return to him and of punishing Ben. On the night of Hartley's release he is pushed into the cauldron by someone, while Ariel-Lizzie is invitingly singing "Full fathom five".[14] In *The Tempest* Ariel sings it into Ferdinand's ear about his father's death. Though dead, "nothing of him that doth fade, but doth suffer a sea change into something rich and strange." It predicts Charles's death in the sea and his strange transformation after the baptism of the sea water. And truly by James's kiss of life he comes to consciousness, as Ferdinand's father is found alive at last. Just before he fainted in the cauldron, he saw the vision of his death against which he found himself absolutely helpless. Sooner or later, he will realize that such a frail being unable to resist the tremendous force of the sea water cannot control other people. Our Prospero will abjure his magic, fantasy and Shruff End will no longer be a magical island. But that does not fully open his eyes and he will have to experience one more death.

In spite of James's advice, Charles is still careless and half-blind about ordinary matters. After rejecting the proposal of adoption, his would-be son, Ferdinand-Titus is drowned in the sea. Charles's hope of rescue and adoption literally comes to a dead end. He cannot properly mourn his son's death, for he would not admit that even splendid Titus, full of youth and

vitality, could be doomed to die. And naturally again he ridiculously believed that Ben killed Titus to avenge Charles. And his last obsession is to murder Ben. But we somehow know that this will never happen, now that he is going to give up his magic. Who pushed him into the sea that night? To our surprise it was not Ben as Charles suspected but Peregrine! Peregrine's life with Rosina was not a real hell contrary to the outsider's judgement and he loved her as she was. Charles was not thoughtful to her even for a moment and destroyed her. Peregrine has been scared and hated him for his possessive jealousy and self-love but was not able to blame him, because Peregrine has long been supervised by Charles not only as an actor but as a cuckolded husband. Charles has been an irresistible demon in Peregrine's life. But it does not matter now that Charles has revealed his weak identity deprived of magic or dignity to all at Shruff End. Peregrine says, "Now you're cold and done for, you'll wither away like Prospero did when he went back to Milan, you'll get pathetic and senile....You never did anything for mankind, you never did a damn thing for anybody except yourself."(399) Peregrine is now out of Charles Arrowby-fantasy which his mad imagination has made into an obsession. Charles for the first time comes to recognize that he may have been a demon for the Fitches as for his best friend Peregrine. His appearance at Shruff End has brought only distress and hate to the Fitches. "Thus people can be light source, without knowing for years in the lives of others....equally one can be...a monster, a cancer in the mind of someone whom one has half forgotten or ever never met."(430) In this sense almost all the characters in this story except James are fantasists who breed their bad dreams through their own imagination. Knowing this absolute reality of men, Murdoch has been contriving many-faceted diagonal relationships and manifold plots in her works, which also characterizes Shakespeare's device of creating dramas.

James visits Charles one rainy evening when "the house is full of odd sound"[15], and the stormy sea makes the menacing accelerating sound of the wooden clappers used in the Japanese theatre. When Charles saw his cousin in the art gallery, he heard the sound of the wooden clappers too. Does James have such magical power to warn his coming to his beloved cousin? Does James really know that Charles's mind is full of murderous intention? Anyway James casually tells Charles that his attempted tricks by spiritual power killed his dear Nepalese sherpa in the snow years before. Just as James made an unpardonable mistake because of his meddling in the spiritual world, so Charles from vanity neglected to give a proper warning about the dangerous sea to Titus. One more mistake must not be made, if Charles really hopes to be good.

After James's departure, Charles knows that Hartley has gone to Australia never to return; his disappointment is not so deep as his remorse for his carelessness about Titus. Then he finds himself remembering the fact that he was saved up from the sea by James in a miraculous unreasonable way. Perhaps James employed one of the tricks, spiritual concentration to save his cousin, but in the case of Titus he was too exhausted to keep on holding Titus's hand. Charles is filled with mysterious joy and James's strange emanations. Before he can communicate with the rescuer, James willed his own death, as the priests of Buddhism do. But now that Charles has received James's message, it does not matter whether James is dead or alive. In this inexplicable ecstacy Charles will forgive his enemies, even *la belle dame sans merci* and will be a celibate uncle to his fellow beings, though he will seem a withered Prospero. While Charles has gradually lost his magic through so many blunders, James becomes more like the real beneficient Prospero. Somehow or other James knows things about his cousin and the latter suspects that James sent Titus to his house. Titus's saying that he saw James in his dream sounds true. If we think of it in a rather mystical way, they know each other in the former world or the Nepalese sherpa was reborn in Titus in this world. By changing their parts unawares, Charles and James, one finally merges into the other as if they were Siamese twins. Metaphorically it can be said that Narcissus-Charles has become one with his cousin, his reflected image in the water. Perhaps the only magician in the novel is

not Charles but James. The one who abjures his particular magic and goes back to the human world, however, is undoubtedly Charles. Since the moment of the cousins' reunion, the Prospero's part is taken by the two, James as magician Prospero and Charles as human Prospero.

Even James could not conquer vanity, though he knew the danger of insufficient magic or half spirituality. To be good and extinguish egoism are likewise difficult and we can only be careful not to be seized with fantasy like Charles's sea serpent of jealousy. Let's listen to James's opinion of magic and the good.

> All spirituality tends to degenerate into magic, and the use of magic has an automatic nemesis even when the mind has been purified of grosser habits. White magic is black magic. And a less than perfect meddling in the spiritual world can hang monsters for other people. Demons used for good can hang around and make himself mischief afterwards. The last achievement is the absolute surrender of magic itself, the end of what you call superstition. Yet how does it happen? Goodness is giving up power and acting upon the world negatively. The good are unimaginable. (445)

Soon Prospero-Charles will depart this sea-side paradise, now that he has given up magic and forgiven his enemies. But before his departure, we should briefly consider the meaning of "the sea" in this work. Murdoch can observe nature attentively and describe it superbly; her "nature" always seems closely connected with the plots and the characters. The sea, the sky and the stars reflect the characters' ideas and feelings, while people in her work are greatly affected by natural elements, earth, wind, water and fire. Especially we feel Murdoch derives her literary inspiration from watery elements. Once she entitled an essay "Against Dryness"[16] and the most impressively crucial scenes are laid by the river, the sea or the bog. In *The Sandcastle* the heroine, remembering her experience on the Mediterranean beach, says, "When I tried to make a sandcastle, the sand would just run away between my fingers. It was too dry to hold together. And even if I poured sea water over it, the sun would dry it up at once."[17] For Murdoch water, and its primal attribute humidity, has the power of reviving a parched dead thing. And it also symbolizes the *unité*, what Gastron Bachelard indicated as its fundamental image.[18] In *The Sea, The Sea* James tells Charles that Plato descended from Poseidon (the sea god) on his father's side, so Platonist Murdoch may belong in a Poseidon family-tree.

Thus Charles has selected an advantageous place, the sea, for his own ressurection and reconstruction of his identity. Charles, a naturalist, loves to see and depict the sea-scape in his diary; the more he communicates with the sea, the more they come to mingle inseparably. Like a mirror the sea sends back the image of his jealousy, his terror of death. He sees himself and the landscape mirrored on the surface of the sea as Narcissus did. Narcissus was dead by the spring but metamorphosed into a flower; in the same way the sea water gulps down Titus and also baptizes Charles to be born into a new life. Again water is, as Thales[19] said, the essence of everything because it is life and death, what eternally comes and goes. Though Charles often personifies the sea as the merciless murderer just after Titus's death and his diary becomes filled with such adjectives as raging, killing, teasing..., at last he can recover a good and natural relationship with the sea. According to James, the sea is the sea, nothing more or less; it is neither sympathetic nor spiteful but sublime. The sea will reveal its secret, the essence of our life and death only when we can see the sea as it is. Now it is apparent that Murdoch is not a romantic worshipper but a true admirer of nature. She has "material imagination", a deep insight into the essence of nature as well as the formal perceptive power of it, which is common to all poets.[20]

The part of "posthistory" is crammed with fragmentary notes which show the senile Charles living alone in London surrounded by possessions he inherited from James. As Peregrine said before, he is Prospero back in Milan. The descriptive form of this part resembles that of "prehistory" but is slightly different in tone. This is because the narrator has completely changed into a new man, James's alter-ego, so to speak. He was proud of his sensible

judgements and powerfulness then, but now he cannot say anything definite. Sometimes he imagines that James is still alive but at the next moment negates the possibility. He will not pursue the truth by arguing and reasoning. If we are humble enough, we cannot define and determine anything in this world. Though he granted his Ariel-Lizzie freedom, she remains his guardian angel; for luckily he managed to escape becoming her demon. From the last note we know that James's casket, which is said to contain demons, has fallen on the floor. Charles writes, "The lid has come off and whatever inside it has got out. Upon the demon-ridden pilgrimage of human life, what next I wonder?" (502) Well, as long as men live, demon-ridden pilgrimage will never end. This final line may go back to the opening line of "prehistory" as if the novel itself were a circle without an end. There is no conclusion but only infinite beginnings for our life and for this book.

The Tempest is Shakespeare's last work; probably the more he thought of his coming death, the greater was the need of reconciling with everything around him. As Prospero says in Act IV, Scene I, the drama is an "insubstantial pageant" played by spirits which will melt into air when the revels stop. Really "all the world's a stage."[21] But why did he prefer the magical island to his actual living place as the setting of the reconciliation drama? What would have happened, had he chosen the latter location? Suffice to say, it is a drama which requires a proper ending. And as we have seen so far, Murdoch subtly and successfully interweaves her own moral precepts with all themes of the play; that of death and magic, of reconciliation and forgiveness, of return to nature, but she wisely restrains from concluding her novel with the description of the transcendental awakening moment when Charles finally sees the seals in the sea. "Posthistory" seems gratuitous, but without it the novel would be no more than an imitation of the drama in the form of contemporary story-telling. We can see the withered Prospero and life goes on; the novel completes its fullness.

Then what does Charles think of his own writing? Has he drowned his book along with the destruction of his magic? At the beginning of "posthistory" he writes as follows:

> That no doubt is how the story ought to end, with the seals and the stars, explanation, resignation, reconciliation, everything picked up into some radient bland ambiguous higher significance, in calm of mind, all passion spent. However life, unlike art, has an irritating way of bumping and limping on, undoing conversions, casting doubt on solutions, and generally illustrating the impossibility of living happily or virtuously ever after.... (477)

No judgement and no reconciliation are final as long as he breathes. It may be impossible for him to close his diary at the reconciliation scene, though dramatically it is more suitable and satisfactory to do so.

> Of course this chattering diary is a façade, the literary equivalent of the everyday smiling face which hides the inward ravages of jealousy, remorse, fear and the consciousness of irretrievable moral failure. Yet such pretences are not only consolations but may even be productive of a little ersatz courage.(483)

Charles will keep writing because there are some small parts of his joys and failures which will not melt into sheer oblivion. However incongruous they may be, they will be "productive of a little ersatz courage," too. Past ought to bury itself before it changes into a ghost, but it always lies with its eyes open in his memory. Both the narrator and the author will never give up their art, for magic is a deceptive art but literature a genuine art. Murdoch says "yes" to her writing novels through her Prospero's final decision to abjure magic but not to drown his book.

NOTES

1. Plato, "The Simile of the Cave," *The Republic*, Part VII, Section VII (Penguin Books, 1974), 321.
2. Simone Weil (1909–43) French philosopher Gabriel Marcel (1889–) French philosopher and playwright
3. Iris Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Good," *Chicago Review*, XIII (Autumn, 1959), 42–55.
4. Brenden Hennessy, "The Nice and the Good,"

Notes on Literature (The British Council, 1977).

5. A. S. Byatt, *Iris Murdoch* (Longman Group Ltd., 1976).
6. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* Act II, Scene II.
7. Byatt, *ibid.*
8. Murdoch, *The Sea, The Sea* (Chatto & Windus, 1978) All subsequent quotations from the novel are followed by page numbers in parenthesis.

   Prospero says in *The Tempest*, Act V, Scene I as follows: ...But this rough magic/ I here abjure, and when I have required/ Some heavenly music – which even now I do – / To work mine end upon their senses that/ This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,/ Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,/ And deeper than did ever plummet sound/ I'll drown my book.
9. See *note* 8.
10. Orpheus went down to the underworld to save his wife Eurydice from death, and Perseus succeeded in rescuing Andromeda from the sea dragon to marry her.
11. Titian (1477–1576) Italian painter
12. Rembrandt (1606–1669) Dutch painter
13. *Titus*: Chapter 1-3, Instructions for Titus to ordain good presbyters.
14. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act I, Scene II.
15. Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, Act III, Scene II.

    Caliban, going around the island with Stephano and Trinculo, tells those terrified human beings not to care about the strange noises. "Be not afeared; the isle is full of noises,/ Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not."
16. Murdoch, "Against Dryness," *Encounter* XVI (Jan., 1961), 16–20.
17. Murdoch, *The Sandcastle* (Penguin Books, 1957), 72.
18. Gaston Bachelard, *L'eau et les Rêves: essai sur l'imagination de la matiére* (Corti, 1942)

    Bachelard has published four books which deal with the four elements and human imagination. He analizes and considers them from phenomenological, mythological, anthropological viewpoints. Though he does not write much about the sea, we can get some instructions concerning the "watery elements".
19. Thales was called "Thales of Miletus", a Greek philosopher and geometrician (640?–546? B.C.).
20. Bachelard, *ibid.*
21. Shakespeare, *As You Like It,* Act II, Scene VII.